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# THE POWERS IN THE PACIFIC

*(From a British Point of View)*

BY ARCHIBALD R. COLQUHOUN

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A PERCEPTION of the important part the Pacific Ocean must play in the future as the arena for international rivalries has been growing for the last thirty years, ever since it became apparent that Japan was a force to be reckoned with. The sensational developments of the early twentieth century as regards sea power, while altering some of the conditions on which calculations were based, have focussed attention still more on a region which, when the Panama Canal is completed, will inevitably lose its present character of comparative remoteness and be covered with ocean highways. The geographical characteristics of the Pacific littoral, while too familiar to need any detailed description here, must be briefly recalled in order that we may visualize the situation. On the American littoral we have a stretch of 12,000 miles, and from Vancouver on the north to Valparaiso on the south—a distance of 8,000 miles—there are only some eight or nine good natural harbors, by no means all first class. Of these three are in Peru, one in Ecuador, and two in Mexico (including the artificial harbor of Salina Cruz at the terminus of the Tehuantepec railway). Chile, whose coast line is 2,500 miles, has one, and the United States can only point to three—Seattle, San Francisco, and San Diego—as their share. The peculiar character of this littoral lies, of course, in the close proximity of the Andes and its continuations to the coast, so that there are few rivers of any importance emptying themselves into the ocean. At the same time an almost complete lack of islands in immediate proximity to the littoral is a marked geographical feature. The exact opposite is found on the Asiatic side. Not only is the southwest of the Pacific one vast maze of small island groups, but the greatest islands in the world—New Zealand,

New Guinea, Borneo, Celebes, the Philippines, Formosa, and Japan — are grouped like outposts on the flanks of the Australian and Asiatic continents. The Asiatic littoral, too, sees the emptying of vast rivers and has a number of natural harbors besides those found on the island formations.

With all the natural advantages for the development of sea power afforded by the Asiatic side of the Pacific, it is a singular fact that the strategy of that ocean until recently reckoned only with detachments of fleets having their main bases at a considerable distance. The development of the Japanese navy, which places for the first time a strong fleet, concentrated in its own waters on the Pacific, naturally created an entirely different situation. A modification of a less obvious kind has been effected by the growth of the German navy and its effect on British naval policy. There is now no secret made of the fact that the naval strategy of Great Britain in the future will have as its leading feature the concentration of her forces in such a way as to prevent the German navy from issuing out of the narrow seas in which it is confined. The first line of defense of the world-wide British Empire is that which is drawn as a cordon across the path of the German navy should it attempt to sally forth. There is a school in Great Britain which appears to be perfectly satisfied that under these conditions the Empire is adequately protected. From the point of view of Pacific strategy the result has been to remove from that distant ocean the immediate pressure of a strong British naval contingent. Concentration in the North Sea has meant weakening our force elsewhere, but the contention has been that we were still covered, first, by the envelopment of the German navy and, second, by our political agreements. As Admiral Mahan has pointed out, the sequence of cause and effect is not quite so clear as it should be to justify this contention. Our treaty with Japan may have enabled us with safety to concentrate on the North Sea, but it was also partly responsible for the defeat of Russia, to which Germany undoubtedly owes the freedom to devote herself to naval aspirations, of which she is making such good use. In other words, by helping Japan against Russia we have helped Germany against ourselves. In any case we have to reckon with the diminution of our own power in the Pacific and with the destruction of the Russian fleet, both tending to increase enormously the importance of the Japanese navy.

At the present time there is no British battleship, even of the third class, on the China station, but only three armored and three other cruisers and five destroyers, while the Australian station has merely nine cruisers.

An interesting development of the situation must, however, be expected from the awakened national self-consciousness of the Australasian dominions. At the Imperial Conference, which will shortly meet in London, the discussion on defense, which has already occupied one conference, will be continued and will certainly include some proposals for strengthening the British force in the Pacific. It is hardly to be expected, in the present state of public opinion in Great Britain, that the Mother Country would initiate any such scheme, and the hopes of those to whom Imperial defense means more than the mere safeguarding of our shores from invasion centers on the Overseas Dominions themselves. Australasia, as the first English-speaking State to adopt universal military service, has vindicated her claim to be heard in the matter. Already some discussion has taken place as to the best base for a new center of British naval power. Hong-Kong is at once too remote from the regions to be protected and too near to the home waters of a possibly hostile force. Ceylon, Singapore, or Port Darwin are variously advocated, the idea being to develop, with one or other of these as a base, a central naval force in connection with the military expeditionary forces which Australasia and South Africa will be able to furnish. The defense of India is another Imperial problem which ought to be interwoven with our Pacific policy, and probably the selection of Ceylon as the naval center (favored by Admiral Mahan) would insure the most effective distribution of force. The expense of a large military force, it is suggested, might be saved to India, and the money expended in maintaining a naval center in the Indian Ocean in close connection with Australasia and South Africa, both of which could be defended from this base and could in return furnish expeditionary forces if necessary. A special interest attaches to such proposals as these, which foreshadow the forging of new links of empire by binding together the tropical and self-governing regions. It is almost inconceivable that where defense is concerned so rich an Empire as ours should be found calculating meticulously the cost of maintaining an adequate system, but the burden imposed on the taxpayer

of the Mother Country is certainly enormous, and the lack of elasticity in the methods of raising revenue has actually brought us to the pass of wondering how we can continue to meet this heavy competition. The solution cannot be found in any single line of policy, but the appreciation by the Overseas Dominions of the fact that Imperial defense can no longer rest on the shoulders of Great Britain alone is undoubtedly the first step in the right direction. At the same time it is obvious that the dominions will not be satisfied with a scheme of defense in which Germany is regarded as the only possible enemy and which concentrates the naval force of the Empire in the North Sea. The nucleus of a naval establishment in Australasia is provided in the two battleship cruisers of the *Indefatigable* type now laid down for New Zealand and Australia, respectively, supplemented by five small cruisers and three destroyers for New Zealand and six for Australia for work in the Far East, while under agreement with the Imperial Government one Dreadnought from the Imperial navy will be despatched for service in the Far East. The All-British Pacific cable (from Vancouver to Australasia) is an important feature in the situation as regards British interests, just as the cable from San Francisco (*viâ* Honolulu and Guam) to the Philippines is for the United States. Both these lines are, of course, strategic rather than commercial, and the British line has the advantage of being laid in very deep water and off the ordinary routes of traffic. Australia's naval policy, if still in its infancy, is sound and vigorous and is not complicated to anything like the same extent as in Canada by the jarring of the two forces of Nationalism and Imperialism. At the same time the smallness of the Australian population and the comparative slowness of its increase are serious difficulties in the way of building up in the sub-continent a formidable power, either military or naval, to adequately balance that of Japan.

Under these conditions the really crucial question in Pacific strategy is how far the United States is prepared to go in building up a navy and whether the logic of circumstances will not force her to base that navy on the Pacific rather than the Atlantic. Among some of the wilder statements in connection with the Panama Canal one used to hear that it would "double the power of the United States navy." This is only true in the sense that the canal will double the power

of concentrating on either coast when necessary, but for the purposes of efficient control in the Pacific it is more than doubtful whether this advantage would be sufficient. It would not do away with the obvious handicap suffered by any Power in conducting operations at the end of an extended line. Since the naval policy of Great Britain constitutes a very effective safeguard in the Atlantic, practically the whole of her navy being concentrated in close proximity to that ocean, there is certainly a good deal to be said for transferring the naval power of the United States to the ocean where it can be effective. Although international relations can never be certainly predicted, yet, so far as it is possible to foresee anything, there can be no reason for supposing that the British and American fleets would ever be hostile to each other. The British Prime Minister has deliberately ruled the United States out of his calculations as to the possible strength of any combination which might be brought to bear on the British navy. On the contrary, every portent goes to show that, while war may happily be averted, the relations between East and West will need a great deal of adjustment before they can be considered as settled on anything like a permanent basis. The present writer has always considered as inevitable a great impetus to American shipping of all kinds on the opening of the Panama Canal. The enormous outlay on that great work will be in itself an incentive, for if the United States is to recoup herself in any way it cannot be by providing merely a path for the traffic of other nations. By shipping subsidies and other methods such an anti-climax will be averted. Then comes the question of that great market of eastern Asia which has been the objective of so many struggles. The successive steps whereby the United States crossed the Pacific, until she is now established close to the shores of Asia and in the heart of the arena of the future struggle, may have had a fortuitous appearance, may not have been the direct outcome of a conscious national policy, but they were nevertheless a logical sequence of events growing out of the United States' organic evolution as a world-power. To protect these possessions and to insure a free and open share of the eastern Asiatic trade is the natural and by no means aggressive function of the North-American navy. More fortunate in her situation than Great Britain, she may reasonably hope to accomplish this without interfering with

the legitimate ambitions of other Powers. Whether or no she crosses their illegitimate ambitions is another question, but it is certain that in international relations, now as ever, points of contact may at any moment develop into points of friction, and peace can only be assured by maintaining, through balance of armaments and diplomatic engagements, a due proportion in the power of possible rivals.

Besides the two great protagonists—the United States and Japan—and the probable new centers of British naval power in the Australasian orbit, there is also to be considered a possible development in British Columbia and an already existing naval power of a minor kind in Chile. The field is not quite an open one. Complications exist in the Japanese population of Hawaii and the possible stream of Japanese emigration to South America, especially into Ecuador and Peru. The policy of Asiatic exclusion, which unites the Pacific coast of North America and Australasia, must reckon with the rapid increase of Japan's population and the certainty that it must spill over somewhere. The United States has been the gainer in the past from the backward character of the South-American communities. One wonders what the course of her history would have been had the Spanish-American colonies been the homes of a more virile race with a more effective political organization. As it is, the big Republic has been steadily gaining in ascendancy over the little ones during the past decades, but an Asiatic immigration, for instance, into Ecuador, Peru, and Chile, where population is badly wanted, might in a generation effect a great alteration in the outlook of those countries. Their naval future would then be a matter for serious consideration. The Panama Canal will undoubtedly affect them favorably, and bring them into the line of world traffic.

The absence of islands on the Pacific littoral is a great disadvantage to the United States. On the eastern mouth of her canal she has already secured a chain of posts, most valuable whether from a strategic or a commercial point of view. Practically the only situation approximating to these in value on the Pacific side is found in the Galapagos Islands, which belong to the republic of Ecuador and are about one thousand miles from Panama and rather less from Guayaquil. Negotiations for their purchase have now been proceeding for some time between the United States and Ecuador, and the latter has always been inclined to cultivate friendly re-

lations with her big neighbor, probably as a "set-off" to her long-standing feuds with her other neighbor, Peru. The small republics are not likely openly or individually to array themselves against the large one, but they are by no means averse to any arrangements which would strengthen the southern as against the northern continent.

In considering the position of the Powers in the Pacific the navy of Russia is for the moment ruled out, but it is becoming obvious that the influence of Russia is by no means a negligible quantity. China, now as ever, is the objective of the trading powers. In the past the spectacle of Russia impinging more and more on northern China and eating into the heart of that Empire was the nightmare of the Powers to whom the integrity of China was necessary in order to secure equal trading privileges. Dispelled for a time, the Russian shadow has been succeeded by a far more insidious force. Japan is not anxious that China should break up, still less does she intend that foreign nations shall parcel her out, but at the same time she has no altruistic theories as to the Open Door. Having annexed Korea and established herself firmly in Manchuria, she is able in a variety of ways to influence her neighbor, and Japan's influence on China is distinctly anti-foreign. The rise of so-called national feeling in China is largely composed of Japan-fomented anti-foreign feeling. In the last few years the railway policy has illustrated very well the diminution, in a territory nominally pledged to the Open Door, of the opportunities for European and American enterprise. One cannot blame the Chinese, but one feels that by their suspicion of the genuine trading powers and curtailment of their privileges they are, in fact, playing into the hands of others whose ambitions are by no means merely commercial. The latest phase is to be seen in the *rapprochement* between Russia and Japan, whereby they are once more closing rank to bear down on the inefficient and unsteady Chinese Government. If the integrity of China and the opening of her markets on equal terms are a *sine qua non* in the development of American trade, then it must not be supposed that she has practically only commercial rivalry to fear. The political game, in which northern China was so long the pivot, has entered on a new stage, and the chief protagonists of the struggle are the United States, Japan, and Russia. Great Britain, with as large a stake as any, is not at present in a position to



wield an equivalent force. China, not dead or dying, but full of vitality, is herself an almost incalculable quantity in the case, but one fact stands out clearly in the possible conflict of interests. China and Japan are Oriental countries, Russia is half Oriental and therefore nearer to them than any other, while the United States and the British Empire in the Pacific are agreed on a policy of excluding the Oriental from their shores. Here, then, is a natural line of cleavage which at any moment may have a decisive effect on the history of the Pacific.

The commercial treaty between America and Japan which, at the time of writing, has just been ratified omits the clause relating to immigration of laborers from either country which temporarily adjusted this difficult question in the last treaty. It will, therefore, be unpopular in the Western States. The problem of Asiatic immigration is undoubtedly of crucial importance in the evolution of world affairs in the Pacific area. Sooner or later it must come up for solution. The people of New Zealand and Australia have displayed conspicuous forethought in this matter. Having decided to keep their countries white at all costs, they are prepared to a man to defend that ideal, and, realizing that an untrained nation is a mob, they are now securing that each man shall not only be prepared to fight, but shall be trained for that purpose. Is the United States equally determined and equally logical? She has not, of course, the immense handicap of a tiny population with a huge area, but she has a very extended and undefended coast-line, and her military preparations have recently been subjected to scathing criticism by those well qualified to judge. The hostages which she has given to fortune in Alaska, Hawaii, Samoa, and the Philippines are of twofold significance in the Pacific question. They may be points of strength or weakness, according as they are utilized. At the present time the United States is devoting all available resources (by no means adequate) to the completion of the defenses of Manila Bay, Subig Bay, Pearl Harbor, and Honolulu. As was pointed out in the annual report of the Secretary of War, the only practicable way to deal with the question is to have well-fortified bases in these insular possessions, thus freeing the navy for effective mobilization and action. The necessity for coaling-stations and harbors suitable for large battleships is a vital question and one much complicated by the

evolution of the latest type of war-ship. So far we have no experience of the behavior of these gigantic armored vessels in warfare, but their consumption of coal is a factor of supreme importance, and in the provision of a series of coal-ing-stations America has the initial advantage. On the other hand, Japan, with her Dreadnought docks, refitting facilities, and all her *matériel* concentrated in the Pacific, has a very advantageous position, and this is especially the case should her objective be not the United States themselves, but Alaska, as an outlying territory of that Power. Alaska is a country of healthy climate and great resources. It is practically defenseless, and it lies nearer to Japan than any other part of the American continent. The Aleutian Islands are a bridge across the north Pacific which breaks off not very far from the Kurile Islands and Japanese home waters. Should Canada decide to develop, under the specially favorable conditions provided by her splendid Pacific coast, a naval power adequate to her national aspirations, the desired counterpoise to Japan in the North Pacific might be secured, but this cannot be done in a few years. Meanwhile Japan actually has a navy in being, has a large mercantile marine suitable for transportation service, and has a system of automatic conversion from peace to war establishment. Moreover, being a nation in arms, she has an ample reserve of men upon which to draw.

The fact which seems to emerge most clearly from the consideration of present conditions in the Pacific is the vital importance of the creation of at least two fresh bases of naval power in that ocean if the balance is to be maintained. So long as the British navy by its absolute supremacy could be counted on as a decisive factor in any part of the world where British interests might be involved the development of smaller navies was likely to proceed on more measured lines. They had no prospect of securing a permanent advantage. The situation we have to face at present is that Great Britain is actually occupied in keeping a predominance in European waters, and unless she makes a supreme effort she can hardly hope to do that. Therefore the ambitions and rivalries which her unquestioned supremacy has kept in check must be expected to assert themselves with augmented force in non-European waters. Until 1915 she has an agreement with Japan which nominally secures the *status quo* in the Far East. As a matter of fact, the *status*

*quo* is altering all the time and not to the benefit of the British trader or of the British Dominions in the Pacific. The absolute necessity of augmenting British naval power in the Pacific by some means will be urged at our next Imperial Conference and Americans must watch the result with considerable anxiety, for the decision must largely affect their own future policy. As a continental self-contained nation they once dreamed of avoiding all outside complications either through alliances or disputes, but the whole course of their recent history demonstrates the futility of such hopes. As far as the Pacific is concerned the security of the great sea-borne trade which is bound to develop there would be sufficient to demand the provision of adequate sea power. The distance between the United States and her markets in eastern Asia, added to the fact that her best strategic points (in Hawaii and the Philippines) are also a long way from their bases, makes it essential that she should find support in the southern Pacific from a friendly naval power whose ambitions and ideals run parallel with her own.

There is no intention in this article of attributing a bellicose attitude to any Power. Japan is as little likely to force a war for inadequate reasons as is the United States. There are few instances in history, as a matter of fact, of nations starting out deliberately to make or provoke a war. On the contrary, there are a vast number of instances of nations, which have developed either sea or land power, feeling compelled by their conception of their own national destiny to appeal to the arbitrament of arms to settle points which were not in the opinion of others actually vital. The only way to insure peace in the Pacific Ocean is to maintain a proper balance of power between East and West, and unless the British Empire and the United States are prepared to co-operate the task will be almost impossible.

ARCHIBALD R. COLQUHOUN.